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Attention, Rick Breitenbach

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RE: COMMENTS FROM CALFED PUBLIC HEARING, SAN JOSE 9/7/99.

HAVING LIVED IN THE SILICON VALLEY FOR 27 YEARS, I HAVE STRONG AFFECTION FOR THE BAY AREA, AND WE ARE SENSITIVE TO ITS WATER PROBLEMS. HOWEVER, I CAME HERE THIS EVENING TO SPEAK TO THE PLIGHT OF FARMERS WHO FEAR THAT A REDUCTION OF RELIABLE WATER WILL HARM THEIR ABILITY TO PRODUCE A VITAL COMMODITY.

MY PERSONAL INTEREST IN FARMING BEGAN 27 YEARS AGO, WHEN I LEFT THE NEGLECTED AND RUSTING STEEL INDUSTRY IN PITTSBURGH AND BROUGHT MY FAMILY TO CALIFORNIA. I SOON FOUND THE DEVELOPING ELECTRONICS BUSINESS DID NOT HAVE MUCH NEED FOR MY TALENTS, BUT WE DID FIND OPPORTUNITIES IN AGRICULTURE.

WE INVESTED IN FARMS ON THE FERTILE EAST SIDE OF THE SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY. OUR EFFORTS IN CITRUS, ALMONDS, WALNUTS AND GRAPES WERE QUITE SUCCESSFUL, AND WE ARE NOW DEPENDING ON THE FARM INCOME DURING OUR RETIREMENT YEARS.

HOWEVER, OUR FUTURE HAS BECOME QUESTIONABLE AS A RESULT OF RECENT DROUGHT CONDITIONS, AND POLICIES TO REDUCE WATER AVAILABILITY.

DURING THE DROUGHT YEARS, OUR WATER DISTRICT (OCID) SEARCHED EVERYWHERE TO BUY ENOUGH WATER TO PULL US THROUGH. USUALLY BY OFFERING ANNUAL CROP GROWERS ENOUGH PROFIT TO LEAVE THEIR GROUND FALLOW. WATER WENT TO THE HIGHEST BIDDER.

THE PRICE OF WATER AND DISTRIBUTION CHARGES RAN OUR COST UP TO FIVE TIMES OUR NORMAL COSTS.
WE ENDED THAT YEAR WITH 1.5 AC.FT. INSTEAD OF 2.5 TO 3.0 AC.FT. NEEDED FOR A NORMAL CROP AND HEALTH OF THE TREES.

YOU CAN ABSORB YEARS LIKE THIS NOW AND THEN, BUT MANY OF THEM WOULD WASTE THE FARM.

THE EAST SIDE OF THE SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY IS GROUND WATER DEFICIENT, AND CAN NOT SUPPORT PERMANENT CROPS, SUCH AS TREES.

THE FRIANT DAM AND FRIANT/KERN CANAL TURNED THE AREA INTO ONE OF THE MOST PRODUCTIVE AGRICULTURAL SECTORS IN THE WORLD.

THIS MIRACLE COST A LOT OF MONEY, AND AN UNPREDICTABLE WATER FLOW INTO THE SAN JOAQUIN RIVER, WHICH DEPLETED THE SALMON SPAWNING HABITAT, 250 MILES UPSTREAM FROM THE OCEAN.

EVERYONE KNEW THIS WOULD HAPPEN, AND IT DID. HOWEVER, MANY HONEST AND ENERGETIC FAMILIES STAKED THERE LIVELIHOODS ON THE PROMISE OF WATER.

WE MAY ARGUE THE MERITS OF DAMS AND WATER STORAGE, AND THEIR DAMAGE TO THE ENVIRONMENT, BUT IF CALIFORNIA HAD NOT INVESTED IN WATER, WE WOULD HAVE HAD FAR, FAR FEWER FAMILIES IN THIS STATE TO ENJOY THE ENVIRONMENT.

WITH CALIFORNIA POPULATION FORECAST TO INCREASE BY 15 MILLION PEOPLE, THERE IS REALLY NO PROBABLE SOLUTION OTHER THAN INCREASED STORAGE. WE ARE FORTUNATE TO HAVE A DELIVERY SYSTEM IN PLACE, BUT IT CANNOT SOLVE THE PROBLEM WITHOUT A SUFFICIENT SUPPLY TO BACK IT UP.

GREAT EFFORTS HAVE BEEN MADE TOWARD EFFICIENCY OF WATER USE. OUR FARM MANAGER, WHO MANAGES 4000 ACRES, HAS CONVERTED 3000 ACRES OF CITRUS OVER TO MICRO SPRINKLERS, AT COSTS RANGING FROM \$750 TO \$1000 PER ACRE.

HE HAS DRILLED OVER 60 WELLS, LOOKING FOR WATER, RESULTING IN 40 DRY HOLES, AND 20 WELLS PRODUCING AN AVERAGE OF 125 GAL. PER MIN. (125 G.P.M. WILL IRRIGATE ONLY 6 ACRES)

IN THE MEANTIME, THERE HAS BEEN 1 MILLION ACRE FT. GIVEN UP TO DELTA CLEANSING, AND CURRENT PROGRAMS COULD RESULT IN THE LOSS OF ANOTHER 700,000 AC.FT.

OUR EFFORTS AT EFFICIENCY ARE OVERLOOKED, AND WE ARE FALLING BEHIND IN OUR WATER AVAILABILITY DURING DROUGHT PERIODS.

INCREASED EFFICIENCY AND WATER TRANSFERS CANNOT SOLVE THE PROBLEM ALONE. ONLY INCREASED STORAGE FACILITIES, SUCH AS GROUND STORAGE AND OFF STREAM STORAGE MUST BE IMPLEMENTED.

Walter T. Ballant